7:Nicolaisen E-5 (1951-1962) 1963 MS25 Tuareg MS25

Dress

In this chapter on Tuareg dress I do neither describe all types of Tuareg garments nor dress ornamentation, but content myself with a brief description of the prominent articles of dress and of certain peculiar garments which are interesting and important for our understanding of the cultural position of the Tuareg.

In Northern Tuareg country pastoral women sometimes wear a large hat plaited from date palm leaves and known as *téllé*, which literally means "shade" (cf. Fig. 231). However, hats of this kind are never manufactured by pastoral Tuareg who obtain them from sedentary agriculturists. Hats of the same type are very common further north in Africa where they are worn not only by women but also by men, and I believe that hats of this sort were introduced to the Tuareg by the Arabs and the Arabic speaking *Harratin*, who came to Ahaggar about a hundred years ago. In Ayr I have seen plaited hats worn by one or two black-skinned men of the *Kel Ewey* group. These hats are also used among the Hausa. True pastoral Tuareg like those of the *Kel Ferwan* group do not wear hats.

It seems as if the hat is a foreign element in Tuareg culture, and that as traditional head garments the Tuareg have nothing beyond the veil and the headcloth described in some detail in the general chapter about the Tuareg (cf. p. 14 f.). We have seen that both the veil and the headcloth are sometimes referred to as *alechchu*, "a piece of Sudanese indigo cotton sewn together from narrow strips or bands", for the traditional veil and headcloth are made from this type of cotton which is highly esteemed for many other garments. It seems to be the oldest type of cotton used for dress among the Tuareg, while white cotton of an ordinary type has been introduced more recently among them. The Ayr Tuareg use the word *maier* for white cotton woven in one piece, and they say that this word refers to *Misr* (Egypt) wherefrom cotton of this particular type was first introduced. It came much later than indigo cotton of Sudanese type, which has been known in Ayr from very ancient times.

Indigo coloured cotton introduced from the Sudan is very expensive and is nowadays used mainly for festive occasions, while daily dress, including the veil, is made of European cotton, which is indigo or white in colour. There can be no doubt that the comparatively cheap European cotton has displaced the use of skin or leather for daily dress. For we know that skin shirts were extremely common in Ahaggar at the beginning of the present century (cf. Foucauld 1951–52, I, p. 112), and Duveyrier says that "le pardessus en peau" is held in esteem (Duveyrier 1864, p. 406). Before Duveyrier we have Lyon's statement that Tuareg of the Fezzan area use skin (leather) for dress:— "A leather kaftan is also much worn, of their own manufacture, as are leather shirts of the skins of antelopes, very neatly sewed, and well prepared". In addition Lyon depicts a Tuareg wearing a leather shirt with ample sleeves (Lyon 1821, p. 110).